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In Perfect Peace

James Russell Miller

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IN PERFECT PEACE

BY

J. R. MILLER

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "BUILDING OF CHARACTER,"
"BY THE STILL WATERS," ETC.

"Noises fail and troubles cease;
Mine the bliss of perfect peace."

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Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee. — Isaiah.

When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean,
And billows wild contend with angry roar,
'T is said, far down beneath the wild commotion,
That peaceful stillness reigneth evermore.

Far, far beneath, the noise of tempest dieth,
And silver waves chime ever peacefully,
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the Sabbath of that deeper sea.

So to the heart that knows Thy love, O Purest,
There is a temple, sacred evermore,
And all the babble of life's angry voices
Dies in hushed silence at its peaceful door.

Far, far away, the roar of passion dieth,
And loving thoughts rise calm and peacefully,
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the soul that dwells, O Lord, in Thee.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

IN PERFECT PEACE.

"The heart where peace abides is like the heaven,
The limpid dome where clouds in sullen might
May come and go; but through each rift appearing
The blue shines forth the same, serene and bright.

"Oh, send our hearts this blessed peace, great Father!
That thus endowed and cheered through Thy dear love,
This life become to us, Thy faulty children,
A foretaste of the better life above."

"PERFECT Peace!" That is what we all want. That, too, is what Christ offers us in his gospel. Among his farewell words we find this bequest: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." After his return from the grave he said to his disciples, three times repeating the same benediction, "Peace be unto you." Peace is thus part of the blessed evangel, and an essential element of true and full Christian life. Christ desires us to have peace. If we do not have it we have missed part of the blessing of being a Christian, part of our inheritance as children of God. It is not a peculiar privilege which is only for a favored few; it is for every one who believes in Christ and will accept it.

Yet do all Christians possess peace? Have all taken into their heart and life this blessing bequeathed to them by the Master? How many of us really have Christ's peace to-day? How many of us lived in the peace of Christ the past week? How many of us are kept in perfect peace through all the circumstances and experiences of our changeful lives?

What is wrong? Is the gospel really not what it claims to be? Are the blessings it promises only lovely dreams which never are fulfilled, which cannot be fulfilled? Is grace not able to help us to the attainment of peace? The Bible is full of great words like rest, joy, peace, love, hope. Are these words only illusions? Or can these beautiful things be attained? Do Christians as a rule expect to get these divine qualities into their lives in this present world?

We may say with perfect confidence that these words paint no impossible attainments. For example, peace — it is not a mocking vision which ever flees away from him who tries to clasp it and take it into his heart. It is not like the sunbeam which the child tries to gather up off the floor in its chubby hand, but which only pours through its fingers and slips from its clasp. Nor is it merely a heavenly attainment which we must wait till we die to get. It is a state into which every believer in Christ may enter here on the earth, and in which he may dwell in all life's changes.

It is well worth our while to think what is meant

by peace, as the word is used in the Scriptures, and then ask how we may obtain this blessing. The word runs through all the Bible. We find it far back in the Old Testament, in the benediction used by the priests — "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Here peace is offered as the gift of God, a blessing dropped from heaven into trusting hearts. In Job, in the words of Eliphaz the Temanite, we have the exhortation, "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." According to this word, the way to find peace is by getting acquainted with God. It is because we do not know him that we are not at rest. In the Psalms are many words about peace. For example, this: "The mountains shall bring peace to the people." The mountains take the storms which beat in fury about their tall peaks. Down at the mountain's base, however, the sweet valleys lie in quietness, meanwhile, sheltered and in peace. So it is that Christ met the storms, which exhausted their fury upon him, while those who trust in him nestle in security in the shelter of his love.

We have a beautiful illustration of this in two of the Psalms which stand side by side. The Twenty-Second is called the Psalm of the Cross. It tells the story of the crucifixion. Its first words, certainly, were used by the Redeemer when he was passing through his dying agony. The psalm is full of the experiences of Calvary. The storms are sweeping fiercely about the mountain's brow.

Then how quietly and beautifully the Twenty-

Third Psalm nestles in the shadow of the Twenty-Second, like a quiet vale at the mountain's foot! It shows us a picture of perfect peace. We see the shepherd leading his flock beside the still waters and making them lie down in the green pastures. Even in the deep valley there is no gloom, for the shepherd walks with his sheep and quiets all their fears. This sweet shepherd psalm could come nowhere but after the Psalm of the Cross.

The prophets also tell us much about peace. In Isaiah, especially, the word occurs again and again. The Messiah is foretold as the Prince of Peace. Farther on, we come again under the shadow of the cross, and read that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." The security and eternity of our peace are pledged in a wonderful promise which runs: "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." A hundred and seventy-five times does the word occur in the Old Testament.

But it is in the New Testament that the wonderful fulness of the meaning of peace is disclosed. On every page the word shines. The angels sang at the Redeemer's birth, "On earth peace." At the close of his ministry, Jesus said to his friends, "In me ye shall have peace." Eighty times the word appears in the New Testament. St. Paul, alone, the great homeless, persecuted apostle, uses the word more than forty times.

An artist sought to portray peace. He put on his canvas a sea, swept by storms, filled with wrecks, a scene of terror and danger. In the midst of the sea he painted a great rock, and high up in the rock a cleft, with herbage and flowers, in the midst of which he showed a dove sitting quietly on her nest. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." We have the same picture of peace in the hymn — the rock, the cleft, the soul's hiding place —

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee."

The Christian's peace is not found in a place where there is no trouble — it is something which enters the heart and makes it independent of all outside conditions. In the ruins of many old English castles a well is found down deep among the foundations. Thus water was provided for use in the castle in time of siege. The enemy might cut off the streams which ordinarily supplied the people in the castle with water. They might shut the gates, so that no one could go out to bring in water from any stream or spring outside. But the defenders within the walls cared not for any siege while the well in the foundation gave its copious supply of pure, fresh water. So it is with the Christian in whose heart the peace of God dwells. He is not dependent upon outside conditions and circum-

stances, for he carries in himself the secret of his joy, hope, peace, and strength.

It is very evident that we cannot hope to live in this world without care. No such life is possible. The larger and the more important the place we are called to fill, the more care must we have. Nor can we hope for a life without sorrow. To love is to weep some time in the journey. One of every two friends must hold the other's hand and stand by the other's coffin. Religion does not shelter us from grief. But the peace promised is an experience which neither care nor sorrow can disturb — it is something that changes sorrow into joy.

A summer tourist writes of finding a fresh-water spring beside the sea, as sweet as any that ever gushed from amid the rocks on the mountain side. He took his cup and drank of the water that bubbled up in the sand. Soon the tide rolled in again; pouring its brackish flood over the little spring, and burying it out of sight for hours. But when again the bitter surf flowed out, the spring was found sweet as ever. So it is with the peace of God in the believer's heart. It dwells deep. In the day of joy it sings and is glad. Then sorrow comes and the salt floods pour over the life, covering it. But when the sorrow is past the heart's peace remains sweet and joyous as ever.

A party of tourists were driving one day along the road to Killarney. As they approached a cottage near the drive, they heard singing. The voice that sang was sweet and rich, and of wondrous

power. The members of the party were entranced. They stopped to listen as the notes of the song rose higher and clearer. Presently a young girl came out of the cottage with a basket on her arm.

"Please tell us who is singing so sweetly in your cottage," one of the party asked of her.

"It is only my Uncle Tim, sir," answered the girl. "He has just had a bad turn with his leg, and he is singing away the pain."

"Is he young? Can he ever get over the trouble?" asked the young man.

"Oh, he is getting a bit old, now, sir," replied the girl. "The doctors say he 'll never be any better in this world — but he 's so good it would make you cry to see him suffering his terrible pain, and then hear him singing the more sweetly the more he is suffering."

That is what the peace of God will help us to do. It gives us songs in the night. It puts joy into our hearts when we are in the midst of sorest trouble. It turns our thorns into roses.

An old legend relates that long years ago some monks had found the crown of thorns which the Saviour wore on the day he was crucified. During Passion week it was laid on the altar in the chapel, and the people looked upon the sacred crown with great reverence, awed as they saw the cruel thorns bearing still their stains of blood. Very early on Easter morning one of the monks entered the chapel to remove the dreadful relic which would be so out of harmony with the glad thoughts of the day. When

he had opened the door he found the whole place filled with a wondrous perfume. He could not understand it. As he went up to the altar, the early sunlight, coming in through the eastern window, showed him the crown still resting there, but it had become a crown of roses, every rose pouring out its marvellous fragrance.

The beautiful legend is a parable of what Christ does with earth's sorrows for all who love and trust him. The life of Christian faith is not freed from pain, but out of the pain comes rich blessing. The crown of thorns must be worn by the Master's friends who follow him faithfully, but the thorns burst into sweet flowers as the light of heaven's morning touches them.

"God hath not promised
Skies ever blue,
Flower-strewn pathways,
Always for you.
God hath not promised
Sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow,
Peace without pain.
But God hath promised
Strength from above,
Unfailing sympathy,
Undying love."

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." There is music in these words of the old Hebrew prophet. Why can we not get the music into our lives? Why do we not all have

this perfect peace in our hearts? Why do we lose the quiet and the calm of our spirits so easily in the world's distractions and troubles? Let us see if we cannot learn the secret of peace which lies in the prophet's words. The secret is in two parts.

One is that the keeping is God's, not ours. We cannot keep ourselves in peace. There is a majestic power in self-control, and we should seek to have that power. Not to be master of our own life is to be pitiably weak. We should learn to control our feelings, our emotions, our appetites, our passions, our desires, our temper, our speech. He that ruleth his own spirit is the greatest of conquerors, greater than he that captureth a city. No doubt perfect self-mastery has much to do with keeping the heart quiet in danger, calm and undisturbed in sudden trial. But this is not the real secret of peace. Our self-control reaches but a little way. One may have it and remain unmoved in the face of the most disturbing experiences, and yet not have the peace of God. Some one asks a question and then answers it. Here is the question:

"How shall I quiet my heart? How shall I keep it still?
How shall I hush its tremulous start at tidings of good or ill?
How shall I gather and hold contentment and peace and rest,
Wrapping their sweetness, fold on fold, over my troubled breast?"

Then here is the answer:

"The Spirit of God is still, and gentle, and mild, and sweet;
What time his omnipotent, glorious will guideth the worlds at his feet,
Controlling all lesser things, this turbulent heart of mine,
He keepeth as under his folded wings, in a peace serene — divine."

That is the secret of peace which the old prophet's words reveal. God keeps us. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." The Bible everywhere teaches this truth of the divine keeping as the source of all true security and confidence. There is no other keeping that really avails. It is only when God is our refuge and strength that we can say, "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth do change, and though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas." There is a story of a holy and saintly man who desired that the only epitaph on his grave should be the word "Kept." This word contained the whole history of his life. In one of the psalms the lesson is written out for us in full. "The Lord is thy keeper." "He that keepeth thee will not slumber." "The Lord will keep thee from all evil; he will keep thy soul." It is God who keeps us — it is God alone who can keep us — in perfect peace.

Our peace never can be more secure than that on which it depends. Our trust never can be more sure than that on which it leans. Only God is eternal, the same yesterday and to-day and forever, and only when we rest in God and trust in him can we have a peace which cannot be disturbed.

"Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting rock, a rock of ages." When we are held in the clàsp of his love, we are safe from any disturbance, for he is omnipotent; and our refuge is secure for ever, for he is from everlasting to everlasting.

We have the same teaching concerning the divine keeping in a passage in one of the epistles of St. Paul, in which he also gives us the secret of peace. "The peace of God . . . shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." The figure is military. Men sleep in quiet confidence in their tents, in the darkest nights, in time of war, in the presence of the enemy, because sentinels wake and watch through all the darkness. God's own peace keeps guard over our hearts and thoughts, so that nothing shall ever disturb us or alarm us. Nothing ever can disturb God. He looks without fear upon the wildest storms. He is never dismayed by things which seem to us calamitous. His infinite and eternal peace will guard us and keep us in the shelter of its own blessed quiet and calm.

This is part of the great secret of peace which we are trying to learn: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." It is God's omnipotence that keeps us. It is God's Spirit who broods over the turbulent floods of life and brings order out of chaos. It is God's Son who stands on the vessel, amid the wild storms, and compels them to become quiet and still at his feet. It is God's grace that enters into the believer's heart and abides there as a well of

living water within, springing up into everlasting life. We cannot command our own spirit and compel it to be at rest, when sorrow or peril is on every side. God only can keep us in peace. Nothing that is not infinite and eternal can be a safe and secure hiding-place for an immortal life.

But there is another part of the secret of peace which it is also important for us to learn. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." There is something for us to do. There is no doubt that God has power to keep us in perfect peace. He is omnipotent, and his strength is a defence and a shelter to all who hide in him. But even God will never compel us into submission — we must yield ourselves to him. Even omnipotence will not gather us into its invincible shelter by force — we must be willing in the day of God's power. All we need to do is to stay our minds upon God. That means to trust him, to rest in him, to nestle in his love. We remember where John was found the night of the Lord's last supper with his disciples, the darkest night the world ever saw, in the deepest sorrow men ever knew, — he was leaning on Jesus' breast. He crept into that holy shelter to find quiet. He reposed all his weight upon the infinite love which beat in that bosom. John was kept in perfect peace during all those terrible hours. Everything appeared to have slipped away and there was nothing that seemed abiding. But John crept into the shelter of love and simply trusted, and was kept in holy peace.

A beautiful story is told of Rudyard Kipling during a serious illness a few years since. The trained nurse was sitting at his bedside on one of the anxious nights when the sick man's condition was most critical. She was watching him intently and noticed that his lips began to move. She bent over him, thinking he wished to say something to her. She heard him whisper very softly the words of the old familiar prayer of childhood, "Now I lay me down to sleep." The nurse, realizing that her patient did not require her services, and that he was praying, said in apology for having intruded upon him, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Kipling; I thought you wanted something." "I do," faintly replied the sick man; "I want my heavenly Father. He only can care for me now." In his great weakness there was nothing that human help could do, and he turned to God and crept into his bosom, seeking the blessing and the care which none but God can give. That is what we need to do in every time of danger, of trial, of sorrow, — when the gentlest human love can do nothing, — creep into our heavenly Father's bosom, saying, "Now I lay me down to sleep." That is the way to peace. Earth has no shelter in which it can be found, but in God the feeblest may find it.

A passenger on an ocean steamer, exposed for three days to a winter's cyclone of terrific violence, was standing on the deck in one of the fiercest moments of the storm, and saw a little sea-bird flutter an instant in the face of the gale, and then

settle down on a wave and fold its wings in restful quiet. So may the believer in Christ do in the darkest hour of trial. "Let not your heart be troubled," said the Master; "believe in God; believe also in me."

This is the one great lesson of Christian faith — "Believe." "Into thy hands I commit my spirit." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." Stayed on thee! These words tell the whole story. They picture a child nestling in the mother's bosom, letting its whole little weight down upon her. It has no fear, and nothing disturbs it, for the mother's love is all about it. "Stayed" means reposing. It suggests also the thought of continuousness of trust and abiding. Too much of our trust is broken, intermitting, this hour singing, next hour in tears, dismayed. If we would have unbroken peace we must have unbroken trust, our minds stayed upon God all the while.

God is strong, omnipotent. We need not fear that his power to keep us will ever fail. There never is a moment when he is not able to sustain us. When the question is asked, "From whence shall my help come?" the answer is, "My help cometh from Jehovah, who made heaven and earth." He who made all the worlds and keeps them all in being can surely bear up one little human life and protect it from harm.

God is wise. We are not wise enough to direct the affairs of our own lives, even if we had the power to shape things to our minds. Our outlook

is limited — cut off by life's close horizons. We do not know what the final outcome of this or that choice would be. Oft-times the things we think we need, and think would bring us happiness and good, would only work us harm in the end. Things we dread and shrink from, supposing they would bring us hurt and evil, are oft-times the bearers to us of rich blessings. We are not wise enough to choose our own circumstances, or to guide our own affairs. Only God can do this for us. He not only has strength — he has also knowledge of us and of our need and of our danger. He knows all about us — our condition, our sufferings, our trials, our griefs, the little things that vex us, as well as the great things that would crush us. Mrs. Sangster's lines give the lesson of faith:

"The little sharp vexations
And the briars that catch and fret —
Why not take all to the Helper
Who never has failed you yet?
Tell him about the heartache,
And tell him the longing, too;
Tell him the baffled purpose
When you scarce knew what to do.
Then, leaving all your weakness
With the One divinely strong,
Forget that you bore the burden,
And carry away the song."

God is love. Strength alone would not be enough. Strength is not always gentle. A tyrant may be strong, but we would not care to entrust our life to

him. We crave affection, tenderness. God is love. His gentleness is infinite. The hands into which we are asked to commit our spirit are wounded hands — wounded in saving us. The heart over which we are asked to nestle is the heart that was broken on the cross in love for us. We need not fear to stay ourselves on such a being.

"All is of God that is, and is to be;
And God is good. Let this suffice us still,
Resting in childlike trust upon his will
Who moves to his great ends unthwarted by the ill."

God is eternal. Human love is very sweet. A mother's bosom is a wondrously gentle place for a child to nestle in. The other day two letters came from a sanitarium in the North. One was from a young wife, married only last summer, now fighting a battle with consumption. She wrote hopefully, referring to the many hemorrhages she had had, but saying that now she was surely recovering. She then spoke of her desire to get well enough to go home soon to her husband. "Surely He will not separate us so early," she wrote; "we are so happy together!" The other letter was from the sick woman's friend who is with her. She wrote that the doctors have no hope.

So frail is human strength, though back of it is tenderest, truest love. All that love can do, all that money can do, all that skill can do, avails nothing. Human arms may clasp us very firmly, yet their clasp cannot keep us from the power of

disease or from the cold hand of death. But the love and strength of God are everlasting. Nothing can ever separate us from him. An Old Testament promise reads: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." If we are stayed upon the eternal God, nothing ever can disturb us, for nothing can disturb him on whom we are reposing. If we are held in the clasp of the everlasting arms, we need not fear that we shall ever be separated from the enfolding.

The position of the everlasting arms in this picture is suggestive — "Underneath." They are always underneath us. No matter how low we sink, in weakness, in faintness, in pain, in sorrow, we never can sink below these everlasting arms. We never can drop out of their clasp. A father tried to save his child in the waves, wildly clasping his arms about the loved form. But his arms, though nerved by most passionate love, were too weak, and the child slipped away from them and sank down in the dark waters. But evermore, in the deepest floods, the everlasting arms will be underneath the feeblest, most imperilled child of God. Sorrow is very deep, but still and forever, in the greatest grief, these arms of love are underneath the sufferer. Then when death comes, and every earthly support is gone from beneath us, when every human arm unclasps and every face of love fades from before our eyes, and we sink away into what seems darkness and the shadow of death, we shall only sink into the everlasting arms underneath us.

The word "are," too, must not be overlooked — "Underneath are the everlasting arms." This is one of the wonderful present tenses of the Bible. To every trusting believer, to each one, in all the ages, to you who to-day are reading these words and trying to learn this lesson, as well as to those to whom the words were first spoken, God says, "Underneath you are now, this moment, every moment, the everlasting arms."

"Whose mind is stayed on thee." That is the final secret of peace. The reason so many of us do not find the blessing and are disturbed so often by such trifles of care or sorrow or loss is because our minds are not stayed on God. We are distressed by every little disappointment, by every failure in plan or expectation of ours, by every hardness in our circumstances or our condition, by every most trivial loss of money, as if money were life's sole dependence, as if man lived by bread only. A trifling illness frightens us. The most trivial things in our common life disturb us and send us off into pitiable fits of anxiety, spoiling our days for us, blotting the blue of the sky and putting out the stars. The trouble is, we are not trusting God, our minds are not stayed on him. That is what we need to learn — to rest in the Lord, to be silent to him, to commit our way to him.

St. Paul puts it very clearly in a remarkable passage in which he tells us how to find peace. "In nothing be anxious." That is the first part of the lesson. "Nothing" means really nothing. There

are to be no exceptions. No matter what comes, in nothing be anxious. Do not try to make out that your case is peculiar and that you may rightly be anxious, even if others have no reason for worry. "In nothing be anxious." No excuse is left to any believer in Christ who would claim a right to be anxious. It is our privilege and duty to be free always from anxiety and to show the sad world only victorious joy.

"Dinna gloom — whate'er ye do —
The world is ower sad,
Hide the greetin' o' yer heart,
And let yer face be glad.

"Life, with never-sparing hand,
Has strewn her path with ill,
And planted in yer heart desires
She never can fulfil.

"It may be disappointment waits
Upon the topmost height,
And you will only climb to find
A mist hides all from sight.

"But dinna gloom, whate'er ye do,
The world is ower sad,
Hide the greetin' o' yer heart
And let yer face be glad."

What then shall we do with the things that would naturally make us anxious? For there are such things in every life. Here is the answer: "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanks-

giving let your requests be made known unto God." Instead of carrying your trials and troubles yourself, the things that would fret and vex you, and worrying about them, take them to God, not forgetting to mingle praise and thanksgiving with your requests. Get them altogether out of your hands into God's hands, and leave them there.

"Yes, leave it with him.
The lilies all do
And they grow —
They grow in the rain,
And they grow in the dew —
Yes, they grow;
They grow in the darkness, all hid in the night;
They grow in the sunshine, revealed by the light;
Still they grow.

"Oh, leave it with him.
'T is more to his heart,
You well know,
Than the lilies that bloom
Or the flowers that start
Beneath the snow.
What you need, if you ask it in prayer
You can leave it with him, for you are his care,
You, you know."

That is the lesson we should learn — the duty of peace and the secret of peace. It is the duty of every Christian to have peace. Not to have it is to reject the Master's bequest — "Peace I leave with you. . . . My peace I give unto you." It is to refuse his gracious gift — a gift he died to have to

give unto us. Not to have peace is to fail to have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, for part of this fruit is peace. Every one of us should have peace. If we have it not we are living below our privileges; we are missing one of the great blessings of salvation.

That is one part of our lesson. The other is that we can get this peace by having our minds stayed on God, that God may keep us in peace. For even he cannot keep us unless we put ourselves into his hands and leave ourselves there. The staying upon God is our part in securing the blessing that is promised. It must be a voluntary reposing. It must be an unbroken confiding. To trust and sing to-day, and then to fear and doubt to-morrow, is not the way to find perfect peace. "Trust ye in the Lord forever," is the lesson that is set for us.

Then the peace never shall be broken. It may be disturbed for a little while by some sudden trial or sorrow, or by overwhelming trouble, but God very gently helps back into the nest those who have been thrown out of it by any such experience. One day President Lincoln and a friend were walking together beside a hedgerow, and came upon a little bird fluttering in the grass. It had fallen out of its nest in the bushes and could not get back again. The great, gentle-hearted man stopped in his walk, picked up the little thing, sought along the hedge until he found the nest, and put the bird back again into its place. That is what Christ is seeking to do every

day with lives that have been jostled out of the nest of peace. With hand infinitely gentle he would ever help us back to the peace we have lost awhile.

The staying of the mind upon God suggests repose. We are to let ourselves down upon his strength, into the arms of his love, and to rest there, without fear, without perturbation, without question. But this does not mean that we shall drop our tasks and duties out of our hands. Always, in every exhortation to trust God, obedience is implied and presupposed. "Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness," said the Master. When we do this, he continued, we need never be anxious, for then all our needs shall be supplied. It is only in the faithful doing of God's will that true peace ever can be found. We cannot commit either ourselves or our affairs to God unless we have done our own part faithfully or are ready to do it.

Says George Macdonald: "I should like to know a man who just minded his duty and troubled himself about nothing; who did his own work and did not interfere with God's. How nobly he would work — working not for reward, but because it was the will of God! How happily he would receive his food and clothing, receiving them as the gifts of God! What peace would be his! What a sober gayety! How hearty and infectious his laughter! What a friend he would be! How sweet his sympathy! And his mind would be so clear he would understand everything. His eye being single, his

whole body would be full of light. No fear of his ever doing a mean thing. He would die in a ditch rather. It is this fear of want that makes men do mean things."

Far more really than we think is work a helper of peace. The will of God is to be done, not only suffered, as some people seem to think, but done in unbroken obedience and service. Work is a law of life, and no life can be truly healthy which is not active. Work thus becomes a means of grace. We grow under burdens. Exercise develops the powers. There is a satisfaction also in the consciousness of having faithfully done one's duty and performed one's part in the world, which is an essential element of peace. Love is the law of spiritual life. We do not begin to live in any worthy sense until we have learned to love and to serve others. Selfishness is always a hinderer of peace. Peace is the music which the life makes when it is in perfect tune, and this can be only when all its chords are attuned to the keynote of love.

We can stay our minds upon God only when the will of God has been done by us or endured patiently and cheerfully. The bosom of God is a holy place, and nothing unholy ever can nestle there. No disturbed conscience can find quiet there. There must be peace in the heart, first, or even leaning on Christ's breast will not impart peace. The poet tells of a heavenly music that he heard everywhere, —

"Let me go where'er I will
I hear a sky-born music still,
It sounds from all things old,
It sounds from all things young;
From all that's fair, from all that's foul,
Peals out a cheerful song.
It is not only in the rose,
It is not only in the bird,
Not only where the rainbow glows,
Nor in the song of women heard;
But in the darkest, meanest things
There alway, alway something sings."

But the source of this music was in the poet's own heart. He heard it wherever he went, because his life was in tune with the will of God. Only thus can any one find perfect peace. Even God cannot give it to one nestling in the shelter of his love whose heart is filled with strifes, or with fears, or with reprovings of conscience. The peace must be in us or we cannot be kept in peace.

Peace gives such blessedness to the heart, and is such an adornment to the life, that no one ever should be willing to miss it. Whatever other graces God has bestowed upon us, we should not be content without this, the most beautiful of them all. There is a German legend which tells of the origin of the moss-rose, the loveliest of all the roses. The angel of the flowers one day on earth, when wearied with his ministering, slept under a rose-bush and was refreshed. Awaking at length from his sweet repose, he felt grateful for the shelter the rose-bush had given, and asked how he could repay the kind-

ness. "Ask what thou wilt, and 't is granted thee," he said. The rose requested that the angel of the flowers would give it a new charm. The heavenly messenger straightway adorned the rose with a veil of delicate moss, thus making it the most beautiful of all the flowers.

However beautiful a character may be, if it has not peace it lacks the highest charm of spiritual adornment. And the Master is willing to bestow upon the lowliest of us the divinest of all graces — peace, his own blessed peace.